



# HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CIVIL RIGHTS

Property of the Athens Anti-Discrimination Movement (AADM)

## What are civil rights?

Civil rights are legal guarantees of equal social opportunities and protection under the law, regardless of race, religion, or other characteristics.

Examples are the rights to vote, to a fair trial, to government services, and to a public education.

## What are YOUR civil rights?

### *Under the First Amendment*

- ❖ FREEDOM OF RELIGION: Congress may not establish a national religion or pass any law that impedes the freedom to practice one's faith however they wish.
- ❖ FREEDOM OF SPEECH & PRESS: Protects individual expression by guaranteeing freedom of speech.
  - "Speech" includes Internet communication, art, music, clothing, and even "symbolic speech," such as flag burning.
  - Freedom of the press allows for newspapers, radio, television, and online sources to publish articles and express opinions without interference by the government.
- ❖ FREEDOM TO PETITION & ASSEMBLE: The right of the people to peacefully assemble and petition the government without fear of punishment or retaliation.
  - Includes the ability to picket or rally, mail letters, sign petitions, publish articles, or use other forms of communication to deliver a message to the federal, state, and local government.

### *Under the Second Amendment*

- ❖ RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS: The Second Amendment protects an individual's right to possess firearms and to use firearms in traditionally lawful purposes.
  - This is one of the most controversial and widely-interpreted amendments that is still being debated to this day.

### *Rights of the Accused (AMENDMENTS IV AND V)*

- ❖ FOURTH AMENDMENT: Safeguards citizens from “unreasonable searches and seizures.” In other words, a police officer, government agent, or soldier cannot search a private home or take personal property without good cause.
- ❖ FIFTH AMENDMENT: You cannot be tried for a serious federal crime without an indictment by a grand jury. A grand jury consists of 16 to 23 impartial citizens who review evidence against the accused.
  - If you are accused of a crime and found not guilty, you cannot be put on trial again for that same offense.
- ❖ SIXTH AMENDMENT: Requires that those accused be told the exact nature of the charges against them, and it guarantees them the right to a speedy trial by a jury of their peers.
- ❖ EIGHTH AMENDMENT: Forbids the imposition of excessive fines and protects against cruel and unusual punishment.

### *Voting Rights (AMENDMENT XIX, XXIV, AND XXVI)*

- ❖ The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of one's sex (XIX).
- ❖ The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any election shall not be denied by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax (xxiv).
- ❖ The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of age (xxvi).

### *Equal Protection Clause (XIV AMENDMENT)*

- ❖ The Equal Protection Clause of the fourteenth amendment forbids states from treating individuals differently based on unalterable characteristics, such as race, nationality, and gender.
- ❖ The supreme court has imposed the same obligation on the federal government through the fifth amendment.
- ❖ The equal protection clause protects all races, genders, and nationalities, not merely racial minorities.

### *Emancipation Clause (AMENDMENT XIII)*

- ❖ Protects every person—all races and creeds, citizens and non-citizens, children and adults—from the bondage of slavery.
- ❖ It is unconstitutional for slavery to exist in any form or by any name unless for purposes of judicial punishment (I.E. Prison labor).

